



Rhode Island Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program

Customer Focus

Fred and Margaret Kenyon have tended to the rich silty soils on their farm in the village of Usquepaug, Rhode Island, for about forty years. With the passing of time their family has grown, the dairy industry has changed, and the surrounding community has become an affluent bedroom town. Pressure mounted for the Kenyons, and their farming neighbors, to sell their land to residential developers. As retirement moved from being a distant image to a pressing need, the stage was set for either developing the land or protecting it for long term agricultural use.

Located in the northwest corner of the Town of South Kingstown, the village of Usquepaug is home to a cluster of active farms. The town has a history of partnering with conservation agencies and organizations to protect valuable open space and farmland. The Kenyon's farm became a high priority for the Town to protect through the purchase of a conservation easement. Its 172 acres of pasture, silage corn, and hayland, with a perimeter border of forests and wetlands along Muddy Brook, made the farm a prime candidate for several farmland and open space protection partners.

The Town of South Kingstown, working closely with the Kenyons, sought out financial commitments from USDA's Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), the State of Rhode Island's Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's open space protection program. With assistance from these three partners the Town assembled the \$775,000 needed to protect this historic, scenic, and productive farm. By contributing about 20 percent of the acquisition cost, FRPP has helped ensure that a centerpiece farm in the community is protected and that a family tradition can continue. With four farms now protected in the immediate vicinity, the village of Usquepaug has cemented a future as a farming cluster of statewide significance.

Overview:

The USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) helps farmers and ranchers keep their productive land in agriculture. The program partners with States, Tribes, local governments and non-profit organizations to purchase conservation easements for the purpose of protecting topsoil by limiting non-agricultural uses of the land. NRCS provides up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement to the cooperating entity, which acquires, manages, and enforces the easement. Landowners participate voluntarily, and protected farms remain in private ownership.

Conservation plans are developed on all highly erodible cropland. Nationally, over \$101.3 million have been obligated to state and local entities since establishment of the program in 1996. The 2002 Farm Bill produced some changes in the program, including the addition of a provision providing for the protection of historical and archaeological resources on farm and ranchlands, and the inclusion of nongovernmental organizations as eligible entities. The Farm Bill also significantly increased the amount of financial assistance available under FRPP, authorizing nearly \$600 million through Fiscal Year 2007. Sixty-seven million dollars was allocated to states to purchase easements in FY 2003.

Accomplishments:

Cooperating entities' proposals are selected through a competitive process designed to protect parcels that will help accomplish FRPP and local land use goals. FRPP easements protect entire working farms, woodlands, wetlands, important natural areas, and historical and cultural resources. Through FY 2002, just over \$3 million in FRPP funds have been awarded to purchase easements on approximately 1,500 acres of valuable agricultural land in Rhode Island.

Due to increasing development pressure throughout the state, requests for FRPP funds have increased dramatically in recent years, far outpacing the program's funding capacity. In FY 2003, partners in Rhode Island requested \$3,906,400 in FRPP funds. This request represents six percent of the total amount of FRPP funds available in FY 2003. Rhode Island was allocated \$837,000 to purchase conservation easements in FY 2003.

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Outlook:

Interest in protecting farmland from urbanization remains very strong in Rhode Island. Public support for funding farmland protection and other open space initiatives has been unwavering for the past twenty years. Past efforts by State, local government and private organizations have yielded many heartening successes, but the job is far from over.

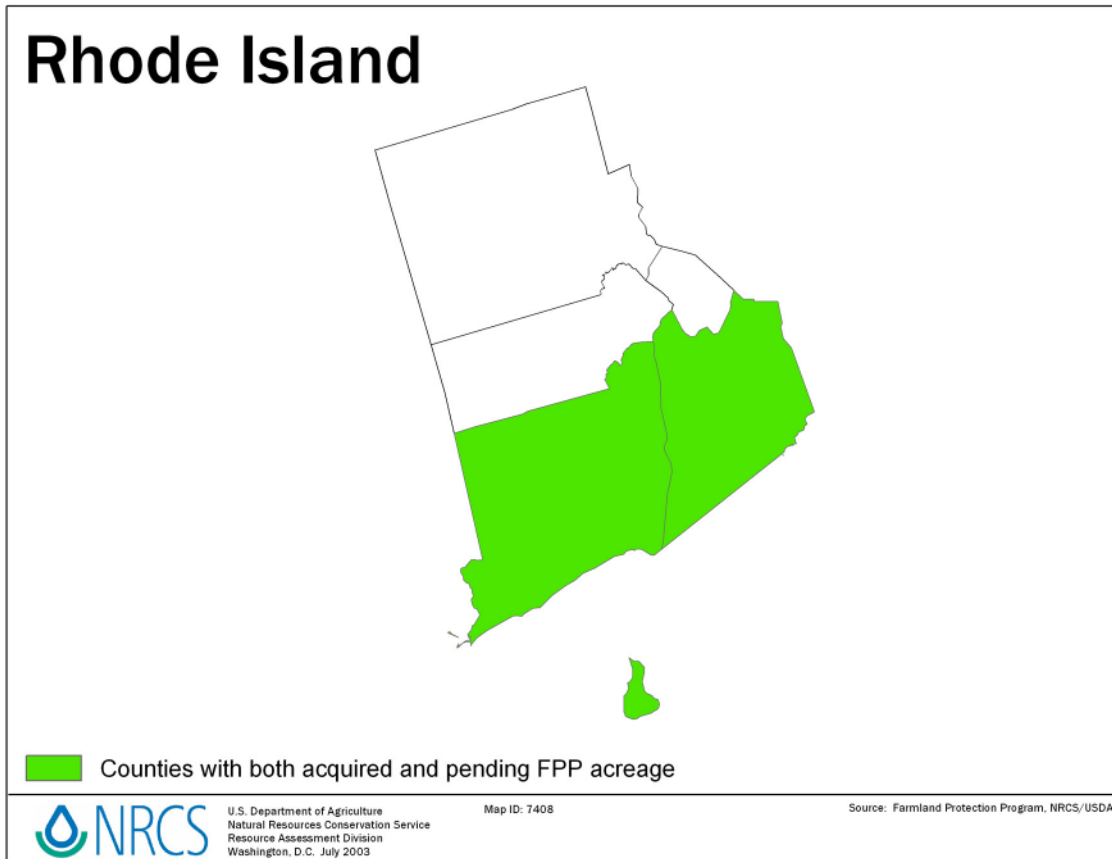
As farm owners age and family situations evolve, the need to receive cash value for farmland has intensified. It is anticipated that the Rhode Island Agricultural Land Preservation Commission, along with local governments and non-governmental organizations, will continue to actively preserve farmland over the next decade. To date, the number of willing sellers has exceeded the available public funds to finance farmland protection.

**Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Rhode Island Easements
as of June 2003
Number, Acres, Easement Costs by County**

Rhode Island					
	Easement Cost			Federal Payment	
County	Acres	Total (\$)	Avg. (\$/acre)	\$	%
Newport	166	2,346,005	14,133	475,000	20%
Washington	678	3,643,000	5,373	1,050,000	29%
Total *	844	5,989,005	7,096	1,525,000	25%
*Totals do not include FY 2002 pending easements					

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Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program - Rhode Island Easements as of June 2003



Trends in Population by County - Rhode Island 1990 to 2000 (Census Data)

